

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

Political Advisors: The Interagency Process As It Should Be?

Mr. Ted W. Halstead, Department of State

COURSE 5603

The Interagency Process

SEMINAR E

Mr. John Beyrle

ADVISOR

Ambassador Peter Galbraith

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2002		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2002 to 00-00-2002	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Political Advisors: The Interagency Process As It Should Be?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see report					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 19	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Political Advisors: The Interagency Process As It Should Be?

What government insiders call the interagency process- or, even worse, “the interagency”- has generally developed without consistent central control or direction. Given the American government’s structure, intended from its founding to favor checks and balances over efficiency, this lack of interagency coherence is not surprising. One institution, however, stands as a model of interagency cooperation and coordination at its most effective: the civilian political advisor, or POLAD, assigned to advise the most senior officers of the U.S. military.

POLADs to high-ranking military commanders were intended from their origin in World War II to bridge two gaps in the interagency. The first was between the State Department and the Departments later combined to make up the Department of Defense. POLADs also ensured communication across the even more important divide between military and civilian leaders, especially critical during World War II since every military decision had a profound impact on the war’s political aftermath.

POLADs today continue to serve a bridging function, most obviously by speeding up communication between State and DoD on critical issues. They also bring back to State knowledge of a military culture that sometimes seems foreign enough to warrant opening an Embassy in the Pentagon’s lobby. Similarly, working day-to-day with a Foreign Service officer (FSO) helps both military officers and DoD civilians learn about State, and the often-useful perspective its FSOs can bring to addressing the challenges DoD faces overseas.

“Diplomat Among Warriors”

Franklin D. Roosevelt, one of the most astute politicians in American history, knew exactly what he was doing when he named Robert Murphy as the first POLAD, appointing him as General Eisenhower’s advisor even prior to the Allied landings in North Africa. Murphy served as Ike’s advisor through the Allied occupation of Germany, and after serving as Ambassador to Belgium and Japan for President Truman, reached the rank of Deputy Under Secretary during the administration of the same man he served for so long as POLAD. Murphy’s tenure created several important precedents worth examining, though due to the exceptional circumstances of his service and remarkable abilities some of his accomplishments remain unique.

The title of Robert Murphy’s autobiography, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, is a good capsule description of the POLAD program. Fortunately, Murphy’s background uniquely equipped him to rise to an historic challenge. Unable to serve as a soldier in WWI because of injuries suffered in an elevator accident, Murphy instead joined the State Department as a code clerk. Once it was discovered that he spoke German thanks to his grandmother, he was sent to the U.S. Embassy in Bern in 1917. There he improved his German, began studies in French, and watched first hand America’s early attempts at European espionage under then Third Secretary Allen Dulles.

After returning to Washington Murphy decided to reenter the State Department as an officer, which he did in 1920, and was assigned to Munich in 1921. When the Consul General (CG) left shortly after his arrival, Murphy found himself acting CG supervising several other

Vice-Consuls thanks to the extra seniority provided by his experience as a code clerk, and remained so for three years. This gave Murphy the chance to begin building a network of contacts which would serve him well as Eisenhower's POLAD, e.g. the Papal Nuncio then in Munich was the future Pope Pius XII.

On November 8, 1923 Murphy prepared an initial report on the beer hall putsch, only to be forbidden to send it after Nazis took over the telegraph station. Incensed by this flagrant breach of diplomatic protocol, Murphy demanded to be taken to the man responsible. At 3:00AM Murphy was brought before Hitler, who was unimpressed with Murphy's protests. However, later that day Murphy did have the satisfaction of watching Hitler and Ludendorff march towards Bavarian police with their supporters, only to find themselves face-first on the pavement after they discovered the police were willing to open fire to defeat the rebellion.

Murphy showed that he had learned from observing Dulles' operation when he noticed that an immigrant visa applicant had the last name of Diesel, and turned out to be the son of the engine's inventor. He then recalled that the U.S. naval attaché in Berlin had written a report expressing concern that Germany might be exporting diesel submarine engines to Japan in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Young Diesel, who was an official at the company that made the engines, confirmed that this was true and provided copies of ledgers showing the quantities and types of submarine engines being shipped to Japan under the label "agricultural machinery."¹

¹ Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (New York: 1964), 1-23.

After Murphy left Munich in 1925 he served for four years at the State Department in Washington, at the same time obtaining his law degree through night classes. In 1930 he was transferred to the Embassy in Paris, where he served until 1940. This decade-long experience gave him a fluency in French and range of contacts in the Third Republic that modern American diplomats limited to four years in a single post can only envy. Murphy summed up the experience in the chapter title, “Paris, 1930-40: Frenchmen Expect the Worst, and Get It.”

Completing his tour as chargé d'affaires in Vichy, Murphy was recalled to Washington to discuss French North Africa with President Roosevelt. Roosevelt explained his hope that the French commander in North Africa, General Weygand, might be convinced to resist the Nazis, and sent Murphy on a fact-finding mission to French North Africa. Impressed with the report that followed, Roosevelt had Murphy set up a small intelligence network in 1941. A German report to Berlin on these agents was forwarded to Murphy by his contacts in the French police, and stated, “The vice consuls whom Murphy directs represent a perfect picture of the mixture of races and characteristics in that wild conglomeration called the United States of America. We can only congratulate ourselves on the selection of this group of enemy agents who will give us no trouble. In view of the fact that they are totally lacking in method, organization and discipline, the danger presented by their arrival in North Africa may be considered as nil. It would be merely a waste of paper to describe their personal idiosyncrasies and characteristics.”² This would be neither the first nor the last time that such arrogance would cost the Nazis dearly.

² Ibid., 91.

Murphy was again called to the White House on September 4, 1942, after America had entered World War II. FDR commended Murphy for the information he had obtained on French North Africa, and told him he intended to push for an Allied invasion there. Roosevelt instructed Murphy on no account to inform anyone in the State Department of these plans, but instead to seek landings unopposed by the French, and to consult with General Eisenhower on his way back to French North Africa. General Marshall decided that the best way to maintain security for Murphy's trip to Eisenhower's HQ in London was to provide him with an appropriate disguise, accompanied by the comment, "Nobody ever pays attention to a lieutenant colonel."³

After listening to Murphy describe the difficulties of arranging an unopposed landing "with a kind of horrified intentness" during a two-day session, Eisenhower decided the French could be given only a maximum four days' notice of the invasion plans, guaranteeing most French officers would learn of the invasion when Allied troops waded ashore. Murphy was designated as FDR's personal representative prior to the invasion, and thereafter as "Operating Executive Head of the Civil Affairs Section and Advisor for Civil Affairs under General Eisenhower," thus becoming the first civilian in American history to serve on the staff of a military commander in wartime. Eisenhower and Marshall both tried to convince Murphy to accept a commission as an officer to end this "irregular" situation, but Murphy successfully resisted, since he believed he would have more influence as a civilian outside the regular chain of command.

Once Eisenhower established his new HQ in Algiers Murphy was able to insist on several privileges enjoyed by his British counterpart, future PM Harold Macmillan. These included the

³ Ibid., 102.

freedom to examine any military documents and to maintain separate channels of communication with a State Department cryptographic section and codes. Shortly after Eisenhower expressed his approval of Murphy's performance by personally pinning a Distinguished Service Medal on him, a major general made his unhappiness with these arrangements plain by asking, "Will you please tell me what in hell the State Department has to do in an active theater of war?"

Murphy's response does much to clarify the reason POLADs were established:

"War is a projection of policy when other means fail. The State Department is responsible to the President for foreign policy. Our prewar policy, under the personal direction of the President, was to support the western allies against the Nazi drive. The North African theater played an active role in the period prior to the U.S. entry into the war; its political trends were important to our policy makers. The State Department had direct responsibility in the preparatory stage leading to the invasion. It was directly concerned in the political decisions inevitably to be made during the military operations, and it will have to deal with the postwar political effects of this campaign. Furthermore, General Eisenhower needs someone to deal with French officials and leaders on the civilian level. And that is why I am here."⁴

When Murphy served as General Lucius Clay's POLAD during the occupation of Germany, Clay brought up Murphy's insistence on maintaining separate channels of communication, pointing out that General MacArthur had succeeded in ending this practice by his POLAD. Murphy explained that he would recommend his office be closed immediately, since he did not believe he could carry out his duties without the ability to communicate

independently with the State Department. Though he made his case, Murphy did it diplomatically enough that Clay withdrew his objections and Murphy continued to serve as his POLAD with his independent communications intact.⁵

After a tour as Ambassador to Belgium Murphy was named Ambassador to Japan in 1952. After less than a year, though, he was asked to take on a familiar job- POLAD to General Clark, leading the Korean armistice negotiations. After four grueling months of dealing with “arrogant and insolent” Communist negotiators ending finally with the conclusion of an armistice, Murphy can probably be forgiven for regretting our reluctance to use nuclear weapons.⁶

The Press and POLADs

Little reporting has been done on POLADs, which is not surprising, since they are supposed to provide support to military commanders rather than occupy center stage themselves. However, a three-part series in the *Washington Post* on the rising power of U.S. regional military commanders-in-chief (CINCs) did give some background on the growing importance of several of the officers advised by modern POLADs.

Regional CINCs control headquarters budgets outside of Washington totaling \$380 million a year, more than double what they had when the Cold War ended a decade ago. They oversee

⁴ Ibid., 103-156.

⁵ Ibid., 291-292.

⁶ Ibid., 339-361.

foreign study institutes costing \$50 million annually and intelligence centers staffed 24/7, host international conferences, direct disaster relief, and have the assets to travel anywhere anytime with an entourage of over 30- usually including their POLAD. Three of the four CINCs have staffs as large as the executive office of the President, while more people (about 1,100) work at the smallest CINC HQ, the U.S. Southern Command, than the total assigned to the Americas at the State, Commerce, Treasury and Agriculture Departments, JCS and OSD combined.⁷

Though State Department POLADs provide advice to each of the CINCs, and the CINCs believe that in general “U.S. relations abroad suffer because the Pentagon’s leadership foolishly shuns deep contact with the State Department,”⁸ relations between CINCs and ambassadors are not necessarily harmonious. In the best-known recent conflict Admiral Blair, PACOM’s CINC, succeeded in having the NSC overrule Ambassador Gelbard’s objections to his visit to Indonesia following the massacres in East Timor. They were eventually able to work together on Indonesia’s problems, however, and though they still shouted over the phone at each other after Blair’s visit they called these arguments “tactical disagreements” rather than “power struggles.”⁹

Serving as a POLAD can also carry a price. The POLAD for CENTCOM’s CINC, General Zinni, found Zinni’s views held against him when he was later nominated to be Ambassador to

⁷ Dana Priest. “A Four-Star Foreign Policy?; U.S. Commanders Wield Rising Clout, Autonomy.” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2000.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dana Priest. “Standing Up to State and Congress.” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2000.

Kuwait. Larry Pope had over 30 years experience as an FSO and had previously served as Ambassador to Chad before becoming Zinni's POLAD. Though his nomination was supported in writing by Defense Secretary Cohen based on Pope's "invaluable" service as POLAD, Senator Helms decided to hold Pope responsible for Zinni's comments disparaging Iraqi opposition forces backed by Helms. Incensed by Zinni's statement that arranging an expedition led by current Iraqi opposition figures would result in a "Bay of Goats," Helms had a staffer tell Pope that either he had supported Zinni's statements and could not be confirmed, or he had not supported Zinni's statements and was an ineffectual advisor. The only possibility the staffer suggested to save the nomination was for Pope to provide Helms' committee with documents he had produced advising Zinni against the position he had taken. When Pope declined on the grounds that he considered advice he had given as a POLAD confidential, but offered to discuss his own views with Helms or anyone else on the committee the staffer explained that this would change nothing since "nominees often say one thing and do another after they are confirmed." After it became clear Helms would not release his hold, Pope retired from the Service.¹⁰

A recent article in *State Magazine* provides a good outline of the current POLAD program. It now includes 17 officers, nearly all in the Senior Foreign Service, including several former ambassadors. Most have relevant experience from a variety of sources, including military service, a detail to OSD or JCS at the Pentagon, work in the State Department's Political-

¹⁰ John Lancaster. "A Nominee's Long Road to 'No'; Some Question System that Denied Larry Pope the Post as Kuwaiti Ambassador." *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2000.

Military Bureau (PM) or pol-mil work at an Embassy overseas. Almost all bring regional expertise and foreign language ability to the job.

POLADs advise each regional CINC as well as each of the service chiefs (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), the officers in charge of each of the functional commands (Space, Strategic, Special Operations), and the U.S./NATO commands in Sarajevo, Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Tuzla. PM's political advisor coordinator, John Finney, summed up their purpose based on his three POLAD tours by saying "POLADs help people from different universes to pull together. They're the lubricant that makes the cogs of two different institutions work together. There are strong institutional pressures on both sides of the Potomac that can drive us apart."¹¹

The POLAD MOU: Program Baseline

The current "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the Department of State and the Department of Defense in Support of the Political Advisor (POLAD) Program" dates only from June 14, 2000, but references a program that has existed in an institutional form since 1957. It explains that POLADs have "played a vital role in the development of policy relating to national security and in matters arising from U.S. Military activities and issues that affect U.S. Foreign Relations....This MOU recognizes the valuable role POLADs render to the Department of Defense and the Department of State in assessing the political implications of military

¹¹ Paul Koscak. "Political Advisers Give Top Brass the Edge." *State Magazine* (September 2001): 40-43.

planning and strategy and in serving as the principal source of counsel on international issues to their respective Commanders-in-Chief and Service Chiefs.”

Under the MOU State is responsible for POLAD salary, representational expenses, and applicable allowances (e.g. danger pay, away-from-post school allowance, COLA, SMA, HHE shipment), recruitment and assignment, and for reviewing the POLAD’s efficiency report. DOD is responsible for confirming that the POLAD selected by State is acceptable (sometimes after interview with the relevant CINC or COS), for providing office space and supplies, work-related travel and administrative support, representational expenses not covered by State’s allowance, on-post housing, access to DOD schools and medical care while overseas on a State-reimbursable basis, as well as access to PX/BX, commissary, military club, and other recreational facility on the same basis as a DOD civilian employee.

The POLAD Experience Today

Emil Skodon obtained his MBA from the University of Chicago the year before joining the Foreign Service in 1977. Like Murphy, he never served in the military. He served as an FSO at posts in the Caribbean and Europe, and in the Department worked on African affairs until deciding to study Arabic and go to Kuwait in 1989, where he was serving as economics counselor when Iraq launched its invasion. Skodon subsequently served as acting DCM in Baghdad from August to December 1990. Promoted to the Senior Foreign Service the following

year, Skodon then served as principal officer in Perth and DCM in Singapore before becoming director of Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Island Affairs.¹²

Skodon's decidedly eclectic background has been a perfect match to the worldwide responsibilities he now has as POLAD to Air Force Chief of Staff (COS) General John Jumper. Skodon began working in a vacant position Jumper's predecessor General Michael Ryan decided to fill in August 2000. Ryan genuinely believed the job was important, but Skodon had to convince some doubters, and others who were simply unaware of his function. Now other officers on the air staff seek out his help, and he has been accepted as one of the team.

Skodon was selected in a process similar to the one the State Department uses to select Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCM), except in this case the "short list" of between three to six officers was forwarded first to General Ryan for review rather than an ambassador. First Ryan and then Jumper have served as Skodon's rating officer, and though Skodon could have asked for a reviewing officer from PM, he elected instead to rely on a single rating.

Skodon's assignment is for two years, and has continued even though a new COS was selected midtour, which is standard practice. In contrast, a new ambassador sometimes requests a new DCM, and always retains this option. The transition to a new COS occurred under the

¹² I am fortunate to have worked previously for Skodon while he was director of this office. As a result, Skodon was willing to take the time to provide me with information on the POLAD program even in the extremely hectic conditions after the September 11 attacks, for which I am grateful. All information in this section is based on my December 7, 2001 interview with Skodon.

most stressful circumstances imaginable, since Gen. Jumper's first staff meeting was held on September 11, 2001.

As a member of the Post 9/11 AF Crisis Action Team, Skodon realized that the Air Force would be carrying out operations in many countries where it had no previous history. He used his experience to advise Jumper on which countries to avoid, and which could reasonably be expected to help the Air Force carry out its missions. Skodon also knew the best approach to take to get information or action from an Embassy, often without using the State Department as an intermediary.

Skodon illustrated the difficulties the Air Force faces in operating abroad by recounting an incident where unarmed AF planes were being challenged by the civil air authorities of a country with which the U.S. has friendly relations. According to international treaty these planes were flying outside the country's airspace, and in fact Skodon was able to learn from our Embassy there that the challenges only began after a radar systems upgrade allowed them to see these AF flights. The initial response planned by the Air Force was to have a high level uniformed delegation visit the country to insist our treaty rights be respected. Instead, Skodon convinced the COS to arrange a joint DOD-FAA delegation in civilian clothes, which succeeded in defusing the issue without causing friction in our overall relationship.

The greatest challenge Skodon faces is obtaining information. His first accomplishment as POLAD was to arrange for COS POLADs to obtain desktop access to State Department cables, in sharp contrast to the two-way telegraphic access Robert Murphy considered a non-negotiable

right half a century ago. He spends about 1½ hours reading cables and memos daily and attends staff meetings at both the COS office and the State Department, where he visits offices 2-3 days a week obtaining information useful to the COS. Skodon has also played an important role in bringing the COS POLADs together informally to compare notes and share information, an effort that picked up speed when his office was the only one available following the 9/11 attacks.

Skodon sees maintaining the desirability of POLAD positions as a real challenge, since they rarely lead to selection for an assignment as ambassador. This is because the State Department's geographic bureaus nominate FSOs for vacancies allotted to career officers, and usually favor officers with recent service in their bureau. Skodon believes that Secretary Powell's strong interest in POLADs has helped improve the program's recruiting prospects, as well as his ability to obtain information from busy State Department colleagues, but doubts that it will do much to change the geographic bureaus' ambassadorial selection habits.

In spite of this, Skodon rates his tour as POLAD as one of his favorites, saying that he has learned an enormous amount of information about DOD, and nearly as much about State. Skodon explained that since the Air Force has operations around the world, to obtain information needed by the COS- especially post 9/11- he has had to venture into corners of State he never knew existed. Coming to State from his office at the Pentagon has also given Skodon a new and he believes useful perspective on State's shortcomings as seen by outsiders. He hopes to take the best of what he has learned from DOD and avoid some of the pitfalls he has observed in State's bureaucratic culture in his next assignment, which will begin this summer.

POLAD Program- Future Directions?

John Finney, PM's POLAD Coordinator, recently discussed his views with me on the current state of the POLAD program and its possible future.¹³ He pointed out that the growing and visible role of the military in American diplomacy has increased interest in POLAD positions among bidders, though he agreed with Skodon that serving in a POLAD position is not the best way to become an ambassador, and believes Pope's fate is simply a risk that a POLAD must be willing to accept. On the other hand, Finney noted that Mort Abromowitz built on his POLAD experience to become State's Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, so the picture given by the *Post*'s article does have another side.

Finney believes that the relative desirability of a POLAD position depended in part on a bidder's background, like any other position, but thinks jobs like POLAD at SACEUR are generally more enticing because of their importance, high profile and large staffs. For example, the POLAD at SACEUR advises a commander in charge of arguably the most potent military force outside the United States, engaged in several ongoing operations, with a staff of between 15 and 20. Regional CINCs are also more likely to travel extensively than COS, which is seen as a plus by most peripatetic FSOs.

The number of POLADs in regular positions has increased recently, with the addition of POLADs at SPACECOM and SOCOM. Finney explained that further increases, though, are

¹³Ted Halstead. "Notes of January 9, 2002 Interview with POLAD Coordinator John Finney."

unlikely due to State's limited budget. Since all POLAD positions are counted against State's position ceiling, additional POLADs can only be named if the ceiling is increased or positions cut elsewhere. Only the addition of a POLAD in the office of the Secretary of Defense would justify such a step, but Finney thinks OSD is unlikely to welcome such an appointment, at least in the near term. Finney found my suggestion intriguing that advisors, as opposed to officers on detail, could perhaps prove useful in other settings such as the Treasury Secretary's office, but thought that would fall into the same "too hard" category for now.

POLADs: How the Interagency Should Work?

POLADs were created because FDR believed a bridge between State and the military was essential, and because Murphy in particular gave him another way of executing his policies in the field. However, after his death POLADs survived and continued to increase in number not due to Presidential interest, but because the State and Defense Departments found them useful. Direct personal communication, even in a digital age, turns out to be critical in helping both organizations cooperate effectively.

It is interesting to consider whether the POLAD model could work between other State and other agencies, or even between two organizations such as Commerce and USTR that often deal with different aspects of the same issues. The entrenched interests in all bureaucracies tend to resist outside interference, and it would probably take someone with the drive and ability of an FDR to overcome them. Still, I think it is worth keeping at least one eye open for the day when expanding the POLAD program beyond State-DoD may not be "too hard."

Bibliography

Edward Gnehm and James Bodner, “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Department of State and the Department of Defense in Support of the Political Advisor (POLAD) Program.” June 14, 2000.

Ted Halstead. “Notes of December 7, 2001 Interview with POLAD Emil Skodon.”

Ted Halstead. “Notes of January 9, 2002 Interview with POLAD Coordinator John Finney.”

Paul Koscak. “Political Advisers Give Top Brass the Edge.” *State Magazine* (September 2001): 40-43.

John Lancaster. “A Nominee’s Long Road to ‘No’; Some Question System that Denied Larry Pope the Post as Kuwaiti Ambassador.” *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2000.

Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1964.

Dana Priest. “A Four-Star Foreign Policy?; U.S. Commanders Wield Rising Clout, Autonomy.” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2000.

Dana Priest. “An Engagement in 10 Time Zones; Zinni Crosses Central Asia, Holding Hands, Building Trust.” *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2000.

Dana Priest. "Standing Up to State and Congress." *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2000.